

Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee

Tuesday October 12th, 2021

Attendees:

WUDAC Members:

Jim Epstein (Chair), Mariela Garcia-Colberg (Vice Chair), Bill Jelen, James Mensah, Ali Oliver-Krueger, Stuart, Chris Pyon, Jake Adler, Del. Solomon, Eden Durbin

Montgomery County Personnel:

Luisa Cardona (Director, RSC), Shawn Morris (Executive Assistant)

Guests:

Eden Durbin, Dan Thompson, Omar Lazo, Chip Py, Kristy Daphnis, Natali Fani-Gonzalez, Meg Morrow, Kandese Holford, Kimblyn Persaud, Rob Fox, one anonymous caller,

Presenters:

Angel Cheng, Corey Pitts (DOT), Del. Jared Solomon, Michael Paylor (MDOT)

Jim Epstein (Chair) opened and welcomed the meeting.

Review of rules and regulations of meeting. The framework is that the presenters will go first, followed by members of the public. This was followed by an overview of Zoom protocol.

6:40pm – Motion to accept the previous meetings minutes. Moved forward by Mariela and seconded by Ali. All members were in favor of moving the minutes forward.

Review of the night's agenda. Opening thanks and remarks concerning SHA topic. District 18 will be presenting a report later in the evening.

Presentation by Angel Cheng - MCDOT Wheaton BiPPA program and the BRT Angel Cheng, PE and Corey Pitts, Planning Section Manager, Department of Transportation. The goal of the program is to provide safe bicycle and pedestrian access for the CBD. Planned projects will be shared tonight.

Project 1 is the Amherst Ave bike lane. Angel likened the set up to Second and Wayne Avenue in Downtown Silver Spring.

Project 2 is the Grandview Avenue separated bike lane kick off

Project 3 - traffic calming project from crossway community to East Avenue

Corey Pitts – Planning Section Manager Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project. The full project is from the metro station through Rockville metro all the way up to MC campus on Rockville pike. Upgraded vehicles may be like the current FLASH buses. The bus would have dedicated lanes throughout the corridor and associated pedestrian improvements would follow in tandem, together with mass transit priority at select traffic intersections. The general intent of the stations is to keep them the same as the current Rt. 29 design.

Queue jump traffic signaling would be at University and Veirs Mill. The stations would be located there for the CBD. The other 2 would be at the Metro station.

BRT are seeking federal funding for this project and are looking to advance the Project into final design next year.

Chair Epstein inquired about how this would fit in with the Gateway development and where this proposal stands with other projects in the county.

BRT commented that they can comment on the Gateway project plans.

This project is further along than the 355 project and has a lower cost and complexity.

Member James Mensah inquired about how usage of bike lanes is tracked. Ms. Cheng replied that grant money is pursued to install bike counters / yearly consultant trips to review use.

Chair Epstein inquired about an additional project that is being managed by another agency (Shared Streets). The data has been collected since the summer and will have a total of 6 months of data in total. The message for cross agency communication between the state and county agencies as called for.

Member Bill Jelen called for a continuous sidewalk along Veirs Mill Road to deliver connectivity to the urban district.

There is a Veirs mill / Randolph BiPPA project currently, with which Corey Pitts said that they are collaborating with that project.

Regarding the bike facility in front of the Wheaton Gateway – that is part of the master plan.

Resident Dan Thompson asked if the rapid bus stations were on one or both sides of the street, expressing concerns about the amount of space available to accommodate the BRT station.

Chair Epstein moved onto to the next agenda item:

District 18 updates – Delegate Jared Solomon

Provided frame up and recap of last town hall meeting and feedback given to State Highways Administration (SHA). Jared also provided recognition to Dan of the WAP and welcome to Luisa Cardona.

Added topic of pedestrian safety. Seeking potential surplus money to implement pedestrian safety measures.

SHA Administration (Derek Gunn) - Planning office, development, and traffic management.

The topic of being to make a left turn onto Georgia Ave from University Blvd began the discussion. The process and the analysis of this concern remains incomplete.

Concern is that SHA is diverting traffic from State to County roads and wasting county resources. Chair Epstein challenged SHA to come back to the table with more definitive information and a solution.

Michael Paylor (MCDOT) confirmed that MCDOT would be available to collaborate with SHA to assist in resolving this issue. He also confirmed that there is a design implement changes to the Blueridge intersection that is at 95% completion. The community raised concerns about the condition of the sidewalks in that area. The sidewalk improvement would be completed in concert with the improvement of the redesign of the intersection. Michael indicated that there is a possibility to expedite improvements of this area.

Update to traffic signal at Price and Georgia – waiting for WSSC approval for signal pole placement. SHA need to give approval of new pole placement location.

Chair Epstein raised the issue about the non-transversable barrier, specifically what happened to the planting / aesthetic.

BRT's Corey Pitts inquired about the design 2 intersections of Veirs Mill Road regarding signaling.

Kristy Dauphnis inquired about a red-light camera to be added at Newport Mill Road to Michael Paylor. She also asked about the permanence of the Streeteries in DT Wheaton. Michael indicated that they will be evaluated in November, however there is no intent to remove any of them at this time, except for potentially Silver Spring.

Luisa indicated the RSC is working with local businesses and the CE to keep the streeteries open.

Resident Kimblyn Presaud raised a concern about the lack of shrubbery at the non-traversable barrier on Georgia Avenue. Michael Paylor will get back to the committee tomorrow.

Member Bill Jelen commented on the success of the added bike lane on University Blvd and inquired about seeing the results of the project.

Derek Gunn (SHA) replied that after the 6-month trial is over that they will go back and see what they got out of the project. Bill had inquired specifically about sidewalk rejuvenation. There will be a variety of distributions for that data, however it will be emailed to WUDAC.

Resident Andrew Rollo asked about the possibility of extending the University Blvd bike lanes. Derek Gunn replied that as it is a Federally Charged research project, the project is likely to have to come down, however they will share the feedback.

Joe Moges (SHA) stated that there are safety concerns leaving the set up during the winter months due to the type of epoxy that they have used for the temporary set up.

Resident Dan Thompson shared concern about the fix strategy for the Grandview intersection. Derek replied that he will revisit and will come back with a definitive answer.

Chair Epstein reaffirmed the position that these are ongoing issues that remain unresolved and are important to the CBD.

Resident Kristy Dauphnis inquired about intra agency collaboration regarding master planning developments / studies / ideas / recommendations.

Chair Epstein raised concern about Georgia Avenue left turns from I 495 North including difficulty turning left into the Glenmont Forest.

James Mensah – Chamber of Commerce

- 1 Small business discussion
2. finance discussion
3. WAP discussion
4. Kensington Food truck night 10/14. Chamber Mixer 10/14.
5. Socialized idea of Walktober
6. Parks and planning building – how to activate / lease??

MCCAB – Luisa Cardona

DEP / DOT presented on Stormwater drain issues. Many people had questions about rebate plans for rain gardens. Report published by Fire Chief

Homicides increase, car thefts (keys being left in cars)

Resident Kristy Daphins inquired about additional stormwater management being installed on Blueridge Avenue.

Mid County RSC – Luisa Cardona

2nd floor planning room for Budget Forum on 10/19

Neighborhood matching grants application is open for neighborhood events (link posted)

Mid County Newsletter contains all this information

Hispanic Heritage Month concludes on 10/15 with an event this Friday at the town plaza.

Resident Chip Py brought up the concern about someone living in a tent at the town plaza.

Plaza proposals are being presented for the sound and the equipment. Productive conversation in terms of what is needed to move forward.

Chair Epstein inquired amount the power and the specs of the equipment.

Mariela did not have a Wheaton Regional plan update.

Old Business:

Resident Chip Py inquired about status of letter to the CE regarding the redevelopment of the triangle.

Chair Epstein replied that the letter was sent, and that preliminary action has been taken and discussions have been had, although noting concrete. Navarro's office will follow up.

New Business:

Chair Epstein moved to circulate the hot topics as per the survey.

We will host a D4 candidate forum

Host a WUDAC sponsored event next spring

Raise Arts and Entertainment issues

Meetings – will be virtual then potentially move to hybrid.

Top issues:

Crime and Safety / Town Plaza / Outreach

Budget – is there a need to write a letter to request finding for agreed upon items? Event planning? MCDOT? MCEDC? What are the top issues for which we need to advocate?

Luisa encouraged participation in the process

Bill Jelen encouraged extensive preplanning for the D4 Candidate primary forum. The suggestions coming in were to wait until late April. The thrive 2050 plan will likely coincide with this timeframe. Bill suggested that we should, as a group, provide feedback on the plan.

Chair Epstein suggested inviting Gwen Wright and Casey from planning to the next meeting for Thrive 2050 to be discussed. Luisa will organize

Meeting adjourned **8:57pm**